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Italy harasses foreign uni lecturers, dead or alive

Pisa lettori ordered to repay wages from grave

By JOHN PHILLIPS

ROME – Italy's education ministry, seeking to head off EU infringement proceedings for decades of racist discrimination against UK and other foreign university lecturers, ordered Italian university lecturers to advise by May 31 how much they need to pay off arrears to the long-suffering lettori.

ros each and ordered them to repay the money. Two of the six would have to pay posthumously, however, as they had recently died, union officials said.

Following a judgment of the Italian Court of Cassation, a Florence Court of Appeal ordered a technical consultant to report on sums of money that six foreign lettori at Pisa University were seeking in execution of Europe-



ALLSI Chair David Petrie with Scottish MP Deirdre Brock, who is tabling a question in the UK Parliament on the plight of foreign lecturers in Italy. Photo credit: ALLSI.

Despite the memorandum issued by the Italian education ministry director general for universities, inclusion and the right to study, Marcella Gargano, who indicated the state will subsidise universities to pay off money owing to foreign lecturers, however, harassment of lettori by Italian authorities continued in Tuscany.

In Florence, government consultants claimed that six foreign lecturers who worked at Pisa University had been overpaid wages ranging from 71,000 euros to 154,000 eu-

an Court of Justice rulings.

The consultants report, issued April 22, says that the six lettori owed their employer sums of money ranging from 71,000 to 154,000 euros each. Two of the six are dead, while one is on pension.

David Petrie, president of the Association of Foreign Lecturers in Italy said, "We have forwarded the technical report to the European Commission. The Commission is currently in talks with the Italian authorities with a view to bringing 30 years of litigation to an end.

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Algeria and Italy are forging a new strategic partnership in the Mediterranean, Algerian Ambassador to Italy, H.E. Abdelkrim Touhria, tells the Italian Insider. Interview Page 12



Pope Francis, seated in a wheelchair, waves to pilgrims as he leaves St Mary Major Basilica after presiding over the Rosary for peace in Ukraine and end to wars worldwide, Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica (St. Mary Major). PHOTO CREDIT: ERIC VANDEVILLE

Rimini hotel to go staff-free from next year



By PHILIP WILLAN

ROME – Italy's first staff-free hotel is due to open in the seaside resort of Rimini next year, replacing human beings with technology as far as possible.

The hotel, to be called Homie, will initially have a human at the reception desk, but guests will book online and be given a code to enter the hotel and access their rooms. There will be no meals, but drinks and snacks from a dispenser and "totems" for communication with staff in a control centre.

The minimalist 42-bedroom hotel, within walking distance of the beach, is the brain-child of Nardo Filippetti, the founder of the Lindbergh Hotels & Resorts group.

Filippetti said the beds would have the same mattresses as in his Five Star hotels and each room would be fitted with a 50-inch television, but the "accessible luxury" would be available for just €50 a night.

The tourism minister, Massimo Garavaglia, has warned that Italy's hospitality sector is short of around 250,000 workers as it gears up for the post-Covid summer season. Filippetti has acknowledged that the difficulty in recruiting reliable staff was part of the motive behind his €3.5 million investment in Homie.

"The sensation is that the situation won't improve in coming months, so I said to myself, why pay for a service that is a disservice?" Filippetti said. "We'll use an outside firm for cleaning."

Solar panels, security cameras and high resistance glass will complete the high-tech arrangements. "If anything is missing the client will inform us first, or he will be charged for it on departure. That will get rid of the idea that someone might walk out with the television," the entrepreneur said.

Filippetti is planning to open a dozen similar hotels over the next seven years, catering for price-sensitive customers who travel for work and are likely to be short of money.

He is intending to expand in the human-intensive sector as well, with plans for boutique hotels in Rome, Milan and possibly Bologna. "They will be small luxury hotels with high quality service and prices of €600 to €800 for a room," he told La Repubblica.

Customer calls police over costly coffee

By CESIRA COLLELUORI

FLORENCE – A Florence cafe has paid a high price for failing to display the cost of a cup of coffee.

Ditta Artigianale in Sant'Ambrogio was fined 1,000 euros after a customer disputed the two-euro price tag of a decaffeinated coffee and called the local police.

Not only was the customer irked by what he deemed to be an overpriced cuppa, but also the fact the price was not displayed – it is only available in the digital menu with the Qrcode.

Café owner Francesco Sanapo took to Facebook to vent his frustration with the "absurd" law and to defend the elevated cost –

"I think that with everything that is administered in bars today, this law has so much absurdity and should be changed, otherwise 99.9 per cent of bars and restaurants would easily be wrong," wrote the multiple award-winning barista.

Mr. Sanapo also pointed out that the decaffeinated coffee in question



was "from a Mexican plantation, prepared with great professionalism by my baristas."

"I am ready to pay for my mistakes," he wrote. "But no one should be scandalised if paying two euros for an espresso: it is a mission and I will continue it with my head held high."

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Wolf population recovers from brink of extinction

By PHILIP WILLAN

ROME - Italy's wolf population has made a remarkable recovery from the brink of extinction 50 years ago, with a nationwide survey documenting the presence of around 3,300 animals.

The survey, coordinated by the national environmental protection institute (Ispra), was conducted between 2020 and 2021 and found a particularly strong recovery in the Alps, where around a third of the wolf population is located.

Ispra said wolves were found in an area of approximately 150,000 square kilometres, occupying almost all suitable territory in the Italian peninsula. More than 3,000 volunteers and park officials covered around 85,000 kilometres on foot to track the presence of the shy predator.

The presence of wolves was documented by photo-traps on more than 6,500 occasions and confirmed by droppings, footprints, and the carcasses of their prey.

Ispra officials said the availability of accurate data was vital for developing conservation policies and mitigating



conflicts with livestock farmers. The latest study was the first to use standardised protocols and to cover the entire national territory.

"Poaching and accidental death [on the roads] continue to kill hundreds of wolves every year, and hybridisation with dogs threatens the genetic integrity of the species," the World-wide Fund for Nature (WWF), said.

Piero Genovesi, the head of Ispra's wild animal department, said genetic

analysis of wolf droppings found signs of recent interbreeding with dogs in more than 11 per cent of cases.

"The mixing of wolf and dog, which produces fertile offspring, is a very worrying problem," Genovesi said. "Hybridisation risks compromising the genetic patrimony of the wolf and altering the physiological and behavioural adaptations, the result of long evolution, that have allowed the wolf to survive in difficult times. In

short, it could reduce the chances of survival of the wolf."

Wolves enjoy legal protection in Italy under the 1979 Bern Convention and an EU habitats directive from 1982, and have benefitted from a progressive abandonment of the countryside by humans.

Conflict between farmers and wolves has been reduced over the years by the introduction of electric fences and the employment of powerful guard dogs, particularly the Pyrenean Mountain Dog and the Maremmano-Abruzzese Sheepdog.

A project in the Valle d'Aosta is due to begin testing a special anti-wolf sheep collar next month. The device records heart-beat and sudden movement on the part of a frightened sheep and then emits an ultrasound designed to drive off dogs and wolves.

The growth of the wolf population was not good news for the farmers' lobby Coldiretti, which said it was time to start protecting the thousands of animals killed every year by wolves and the mountain farmers who risked losing their livelihoods as a result.

Stromboli fire during RAI shoot probed

STROMBOLI - A probe is underway into a fierce fire that raced through 10 hectares of a pristine nature reserve on the Aeolian Island of Stromboli that was apparently set off by an overzealous film crew shooting a TV soap opera on the island.

The sirocco wind fanned the flames of the fire, which broke out on the morning of May 25 during the filming of the television series, "Civil Protection," starring Italian actress and singer Amra Angiolini.

A key question in the investigation is who and why a fire was lit on location when the script did not call for any scenes with flames.

"In the script that they sent us ... they did not tell us that they would start a small fire during the shooting, but then I don't know who decided to do so, perhaps they were reassured by our presence, but the strong sirocco wind set the fire ablaze in a few minutes," explained engineer Salvo Cantale, emergency manager of the Sicilian Region Fire Brigade.

"Any operation carried out was not authorised in the absence of the fire brigade team," said mayor of Lipari Marco Giorgianni whose administration has jurisdiction over Stromboli.

Five dead after boat sinks

BARI - Five men died after their tugboat sank while towing a pontoon off the coast of Bari in southern Italy, the Italian coastguard said on Thursday.

The Franco P tugboat had been pulling the pontoon along the Italy-Albania route, 53 miles off the port of Bari, when it started sinking, the coastguard said in a statement.

An air and sea rescue was launched after an alarm signal was picked up from the vessel on Wednesday.

Four bodies have been recovered and another has been sighted. The Coast Guard will transport them to the port of Bari.

Overnight, a Croatian ship rescued the boat's captain from rough seas, the statement said.

Anti-Mafia blitz

PALERMO - The state police and Carabinieri of Palermo have arrested 31 suspects with alleged links to the "Cosa Nostra" Sicilian mafia, accused of crimes ranging from extortion to weapons and drug trafficking, police sources said on Tuesday.

The blitz, carried out Monday night in Palermo, Reggio Calabria, Alessandria and Genoa, follows an investigation into the mafia families of the districts of Ciaculli and Brancaccio, as well as Corso dei Mille and Roccella.

Of the 31 suspects, 29 are subject to precautionary custody orders in prison, while two are to be placed under house arrest.

Among the offenses, 16 relate to drug possession: around 80 kilos of drugs including cocaine, hashish and marijuana, worth over eight million euros, were seized. The defendants are also accused, at the height of the pandemic, of the theft of some 16 thousand FFP3 masks.

Wild boars pose growing threat to people

By LOUISE NIMMO

ROME - Coldiretti, the farmer's trade union, has flagged the growing number of wild boars as a significant problem, both for the direct threat they pose to human safety and the indirect issues of crop damage and running into roads, said Italy's national news agency.

On Sunday, a woman named Marta Santangelo was attacked near her home in northern Rome by two adult wild boars with their six boarlets. Santangelo's dog defended her and managed to scare off the animals, saving its owner from potentially much worse harm.

"This is not admissible in a capi-



tal," said David Granieri, president of Coldiretti Lazio, commenting on the latest aggression of boars towards humans in the city. "Wild boars now represent a serious danger for citizens and also for our farmers, who due to

their proliferation are forced to suffer constant invasions in the fields that destroy their crops."

In Rome there are estimated to be over 20 thousand wild boars and this number is expected to grow. In the whole region of Lazio, there are over 100 thousand wild boars.

In some cases, farmers have seen up to 80 per cent of the crop damaged.

In Lazio, the cost of damage caused by wild boars estimated by the Coldiretti regional federation went from an average of 3.5 million euros in previous years to 10 million euros in the pandemic period alone, an unprecedented increase. In just the city of Rome and its province, damages amounted to approximately two mil-

lion euros of this cost, and that in the span of only one year.

Coldiretti also pointed out the risk to drivers. According to Asaps data, an accident occurs every 48 hours with 16 victims and 215 injured in the past year. This is the tragic outcome of the skyrocketing numbers of boars and other wild animals, which break down fences, block rivers and cross roads and motorways, putting people's lives and safety at risk.

In the last 10 years, according to Coldiretti estimates based on Aci Istat data, the number of serious accidents with deaths and injuries caused by animals has seen an increase of 81 percent on provincial roads.

New entries among resorts receiving Blue Flag

By ALEKSANDRA KUBACKA

ROME - As many as 210 Italian municipalities have obtained the Blue Flag this year for clean sea water, nine more than in 2021, as told by the Ansa news agency.

The Blue Flag is a certification by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), an international NGO based in Denmark, that a beach, marina, or sustainable boating tourism operator meets its environmental and quality standards. The aim of the program is to promote environmental protection seaside resorts, bathing areas and yacht harbours.

The 14 new places awarded with the Blue Flag are Alba Adriatica in Abruzzo, Caulonia and Isola di Capo Rizzuto in Calabria, Ispani in Campania,

Riccione and San Mauro Pascoli in Emilia Romagna, Porto Recanati in the Marche, Cannobio in Piedmont, Castro, Rodi Garganico and Ugento in Puglia, Budoni in Sardinia, Furci Si-



Isola di Capo Rizzuto in Calabria

culo in Sicily, Pietrasanta in Tuscany, San Mauro Cilento and Sapri in Campania, Ventotene in Lazio, the Tremi Islands and Otranto in Puglia have not been confirmed this year.

The criteria for awarding the Blue Flag refer to validity of bathing water, efficiency of purification and waste management, pedestrian areas, cycle paths, street furniture, green areas, beach services, removal of architectural barriers, courses of environmental education, hotel facilities, public health services, tourist information, environmental certification of institutional activities and tourist facilities, sustainable fishing.



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Backing the sentiments of the café owner was the president of the small business association Confindustria Imprese, Alessandro Vittorio Sorani - "Not considering the quality of a product where there is a great deal of work behind it is something that saddens me deeply," he said. "You pay for quality and it benefits everyone."

Serena Nobili of Dini Caffè also weighed in - "We are in 2022 but still in Italy we cannot speak of quality when it comes to coffee, in this sector quality is not perceived: it is very serious."

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The nub of the matter is that Italian courts were applying law 63 of 2004, that was endorsed by the European Court of Justice as conforming to EU law. Subsequently, however, the Italian government enacted article 26 of the so-called Gelmini law of 2010 - it is the application of this law that leads to the self evident absurdity of a lettore being paid 1.500 euros a month after 31 years service being told to repay 150,000 euros for 'erroneously paid' arrears on wages."

"That this should happen following six favourable rulings of the Court of Justice of the European Union is

gobsmacking," Prof. Petrie said.

The memorandum sent to University rectors by Dr Gargano, may raise hopes of some lettori who were employed before 1995, receiving some compensation.

However Prof. Petrie cautioned that "the sticking point is the co-financing ... universities will not want to cough up a cent from their own budgets."

Meanwhile on Tuesday 22 May, a Milan judge granted Milan University's request for adjournment of a hearing concerning three lettori, citing the ministerial circular and requesting more time for the delivery of the arrears due to the three.